Curios and Relics

Weapons

Guns

Owned by Lincoln

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

gun and rail

Buffalo Hart, Ill.
May 31st 1932.

Dr. Louis L. Warren,
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dear Mr. Warren— I see by the Illinois State Journal, that you are in request of Abraham Lincoln Relics.

I have two Lincoln relics, which I value at twenty five hundred dollars.

One, an old fashioned, muzzle loading shot gun, (yet in good commission) which my Father bought of Mr. Lincoln when he, (Father) lived near Pastoriza Ill.

He, & Mr. Lincoln were great friends, & Lincoln would make it a point to stop over night with him, when he was riding the circuit practicing law.

2nd Is a Rail made by Mr. Lincoln, on my Grand Father's Farm here at Buffalo Hart the Spring of 1858.

Grand Father was splitting timber near his barn, & a man rode up & ask him "if he could do anything for a sick horse?" after drenching, the horse was turned loose in the lot & Grand Father went back to

gun and rail

Buffalo Hart, Ill.
Mar. 31st 1932.

Dr. Louis L. Warren,
Port Wayne, Ind.

Dear Mr. Warren— I see by the Illinois State Journal, that you are in request of Abraham Lincoln Relics.

I have two Lincoln relics, which I value at twenty five hundred dollars.

One, an old fashioned, muzzle loading shot gun, (yet in good commission) which my Father bought of Mr. Lincoln when he (Father) lived near Postville Ill.

He, & Mr. Lincoln were great friends, & Lincoln would make it a point to stop over night with him, when he was riding the circuit practicing Law.

2nd Is a Rail made by Mr. Lincoln, on my Grand Father's farm here at Buffalo Hart the Spring of 1858.

Grand Father was clearing timber near his farm, & a man rode up, & ask him if he could do anything for a sick horse? after drenching, the horse was turned loose in the lot & Grand Father went back to work, & Mr. Lincoln took off his coat and said he used to cord "Split rails" and worked until dinner was ready, and at

dinner, & went on his way, he was then on his way to Mt. Pulaski, & Lincoln, to plead lawsuits.
(My Father, married Grand Fathers daughter)
The next day my Father was there, & Grand Father told him, "there were some rails that Lincoln Split" ad Father said he would take a couple to remember him by, one of the rails were stolen & this one has been in the family ever since. The rail is in a good state of preservation, being treated twice a year with Wal-oil, to keep worms out of it.
I will make affidavit that both are Genuine, & authentic.
If interested, what is your best offer.

Very Respt.
G. M. Fletcher
Buffalo Hart, Ill.

April 5, 1932

F. M. Fletcher
Buffalo Hart, Ill.

Dear Mr. Fletcher:

Dr. Warren has instructed me to inform you that our museum facilities do not allow for displays such as you described in your recent and interesting letter, since our space is somewhat limited - books, manuscripts, and pictures being our specialities.

A letter to H. R. Waddell, Secretary to Henry Ford, Dearborn, Michigan, may prove of value to you, should you care to address him. Mr. Ford is highly interested in anything connected with Lincoln, and has been purchasing relics for some time.

We are enclosing some museum literature which may be of interest to you, and wish to thank you for your kindness and courtesy in informing us of of these items.

Yours sincerely,

Ethel Henneford
Assistant Director
Lincoln Historical
Research Foundation

EVH/h

75

Yakima, Wash. Apr. 5 - 32

Dr. Louis A. Warren

Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Sir

I read in the Park Record published at Park City Utah that you would like to get a line of any Abe Lincoln relics, my wife Mrs. Nettie H. Dienn of 321 East A. Str. Yakima, Wash. has a pocket pistol that was carried by Abraham Lincoln if interested you may communicate with her in proceeding same

Yours truly

John Dienn

Yakima Wn.
April 14-32

Mr Louis A Warren
Dear Sir

we received your reply in regard to information on the Abraham Lincoln Gun we were fourth owners of the Gun
It is 5½ inches long. Mahogany handle silver plated. shoots No 41 Cartridge "Single Breech loading Derringer"
Abraham Lincoln shortly before his death gave the Gun to Colonel Edward Baker.
Later Colonel Baker gave it to his son Woodie Baker.
Woodie Baker & my former husband Mr E. E. Thomas were very close

April 19, 1932

Mrs. John Diem

321 E. A. St.

Yakima, Washington

Dear Mrs. Diem:

Thank you very much for the information regarding the Abraham Lincoln gun but we do not feel that we care to acquire it.

Sincerely,

_____Director
Lincoln Historical Research Foundation

LAW/H

Gun.

March 8, 1944

Mr. Walter C. Farlow
R. F. D. #1
Milroy, Indiana

My dear Mr. Farlow:

Thank you very much for calling to our attention the Lincoln gun which you think you might secure but we are not interested here in acquiring Lincoln curios such as you mention.

Very truly yours,

Director

LAW:CRS
L.A.Warren

400 SOUTH NINTH HERSCHEL C. LOGAN SALINA, KANSAS

March 29, 1944.

Louis A. Warren, Director,
Lincoln National Life Foundation,
Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Dear Mr. Warren:

In your wealth of Lincoln material, do you perchance have any items which mention the hand guns or rifles used by Abraham Lincoln?

I am attempting to gather together data on the arms used by famous Americans. And, where it is possible, to secure photos of the actual arms, if they are still known to be in existence.

Any information or assistance you can give me will be greatly appreciated.

Yours very truly,

HERSCHEL C. LOGAN

Fed Gun

March 31, 1944

Mr. Herschel C. Logan
400 S. Ninth
Salina, Kansas

My dear Mr. Logan:

Although we have several references relating to pistols and guns said to have been owned by Lincoln or presented to friends by him, I doubt very much the authenticity of most of them.

A rifle purchased by Abraham Lincoln and Henry for $15.00 when they lived in Spencer County, Indiana, seems to be the most authentic . It was owned by George E. Burton and sold in 1915 at auction for $285.00. I do not know the name of the purchaser.

Lincoln is said to have presented a "revolving pistol" to Clay in 1861.

There is evidence that Lincoln tried out some different types of rifles for the Army while serving as Commander in Chief but no evidence that he ever possessed any firearms as far as I can learn with the possible exception of the old gun which he carried in his boyhood.

Of course, the Berringher pistol which Booth used at the time of the assassination is the most historic gun associated with Abraham Lincoln and it is at the Ford Museum at Washington, D.C.

Very truly yours,

LAW:WM

Director

March 31, 1944

Mr. Marshal C. Logan
400 S. Ninth
Dallas, Texas

My dear Mr. Logan:

Although we have several references relating to pistols and guns said to have been owned by Lincoln or presented to friends by him, I doubt very much the authenticity of most of them.

A title provided by Andrew Lincoln and Henry for $15.00 when they lived in Spencer County, Indiana, seems to be the most authentic . It was owned by George K. Fortson and sold in 1915 at auction for $225.00. I do not know the name of the purchaser.

Lincoln is said to have presented a "revolving pistol" to Clay in 1861.

There is evidence that Lincoln tried out some different types of rifles for the Army while serving as Commander in Chief but no evidence that he ever possessed any firearms as far as I can learn with the possible exception of the old gun which he carried in his boyhood.

Of course, the Derringer pistol which Booth used at the time of the assassination is the most interesting gun associated with Abraham Lincoln and it is at the Ford Museum at Washington, D.C.

Very truly yours,

LAM:MM Director

SHOOTING TIMES

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FEBRUARY, 1964

50 Cents

IS MARKSMANSHIP IN AMERICA A BIG JOKE?

TRACKING KNOW-HOW GETS GAME

RELOADING SECTION

Little Known Facts About Lincoln's Guns

Build-it Bonus


THE
L. OSTENDORF

THE MAN OFTEN CALLED THE "SECOND FATHER" OF HIS COUNTRY WAS WELL-ACQUAINTED WITH FIREARMS. IN FACT, HE ONCE OWNED 50 PER CENT OF A FLINTLOCK 'SQUIRREL GUN!'

GUNS in his LIFE

PRESIDENT Abraham Lincoln's interest in firearms and the development of weapons during the Civil War has been given considerable attention by his biographers. But very little has been said about the guns he owned during his lifetime.

The fact is that his great, inquisitive mind was intrigued by the inventions of Spencer, Sharps, Gatling and others who fought government red tape in an effort to introduce their guns to the Army Ordnance Department. To cite just a few examples of Mr. Lincoln's interest in new weapons:

The President personally watched Hiram Berdan's sharpshooters put on a hair-curling exhibition with Sharps' breech-loading, rapid-firing rifles. He congratulated the sharpshooters and ordered Colonel Berdan's brigade to be supplied with the new weapons.

In August, 1863, the President personally tested and approved Christopher Spencer's revolutionary repeater. It could fire seven times faster than the .58 caliber muzzle-loaders then in use. And through Lincoln's direct intervention over the procedures of the antiquated Ordnance Department, they reached the troops in the field in sufficient quantities to become a real military factor in the Civil War.

Some distance behind the White House the President often set up targets and checked out the merits of new rifles brought to his attention. At one time, he put seven shots into a board at 40 yards—the first shot was six inches below the bull's-eye, the second one struck the bull's-eye, and the other five were close to it. Lincoln realized firsthand the value of a quick-firing gun. His biographers have given little or no attention to how he gained his

By Lloyd Ostendorf

knowledge of firearms, nor have they speculated when and where his skill as a marksman was developed.

As a circuit riding lawyer most of his adult life he did not carry a gun and had less chance to use one. His only military experience was during the Black Hawk Indian War. In 1832, when he enlisted, he was elected captain of his backwoods militia, and at that time gained a further acquaintance with firearms. The young captain did carry a sword as a sidearm, but never came close enough to any enemy redskin to have occasion to exercise his long arms with it.

A few years later, in 1842, Lincoln the lawyer had an opportunity to use a sword—when he was challenged to a duel! A political rival, James Shields, felt that his honor had been offended by a series of newspaper letters co-authored by Abe Lincoln. The matter was to be settled on the field of honor.

When asked his choice of weapons, Lincoln first attempted to laugh off the gravity of the situation by his remark, "How about cow dung at five paces?"

Then he chose cavalry broadswords of the largest size. He knew, with his long arms, he could if necessary split his opponent from the top of his head right down the middle. Accustomed as he was to splitting rails in his youth, he knew that the gentleman, Shields, would be no match for him. However, cooler heads argued, and through his second, Lincoln apologized. Wisely enough, the proposed duel was called off, and any swordsmanship Lincoln may have possessed was never demonstrated in combat.

But what about his marksmanship with a pistol? He avoided a contest with them in the proposed duel, shrewdly realizing his even greater advantage with the sword. It would necessarily follow that any skill he had attained as a marksman must have been learned in his earlier years. In this area of his life only a few facts are known. But put together, Abe's association with firearms is revealed in a newer light.

First of all, his introduction to weapons came by way of his father's long rifle. Dennis Hanks, a cousin to Lincoln and an older playmate, told of his early hunting exploits. ". . . Abe was right out in the woods, about as soon's he was weaned, fishing in the crick, settin' traps fur rabbits an' muskrats, going on coon-hunts with Tom an' the dogs, followin' up bees to find bee trees . . ."

Having been born in pioneer Kentucky, Abe Lincoln was a child of the wilderness. He learned the ways of nature and the trees of the forest. As a

(Turn Page)

GUNS in his LIFE

(Continued)

youngster he had a hunting hound by the name of Honey. The pair would explore the Knob Creek area. A neighbor boy, Austin Gollaher, four years older than Abe, became his hunting companion. Austin toting his gun and Abe with his dog, they would venture forth into the Kentucky hills.

In his later years, old Austin Gollaher recalled how they "chased and trapped coons, made bridges across creeks, climbed trees, listened and tried to whistle like birds, played tricks on each other, went fishing with homemade hooks, and shot or caught rabbits and wild ducks and some turkey for food . . ." which to them, "was all fun."

Austin recalled also the day when Abe was six and he was ten and they were out together with the family rifle and the dog, Honey. The hound bounded ahead, as the story goes, and crossed the path of a wildcat. It was not long until a fight was on and the fur flew. Abe, helpless and excited, jumped up and down as he shouted for his friend to shoot the cat before his dog got the worst of it. Before Austin could get a clear shot at the tussling cat, the combat ended—the wildcat lighting out one way and the hound going the other, minus a few hairs. Said young Abe. "I thought that wildcat was going to skin Honey alive!"

Lincoln himself wrote that he "took an early start as a hunter," but claimed that he "never much improved afterwards." In his autobiographical sketch, written in the third person, Lincoln told of an early hunting incident:

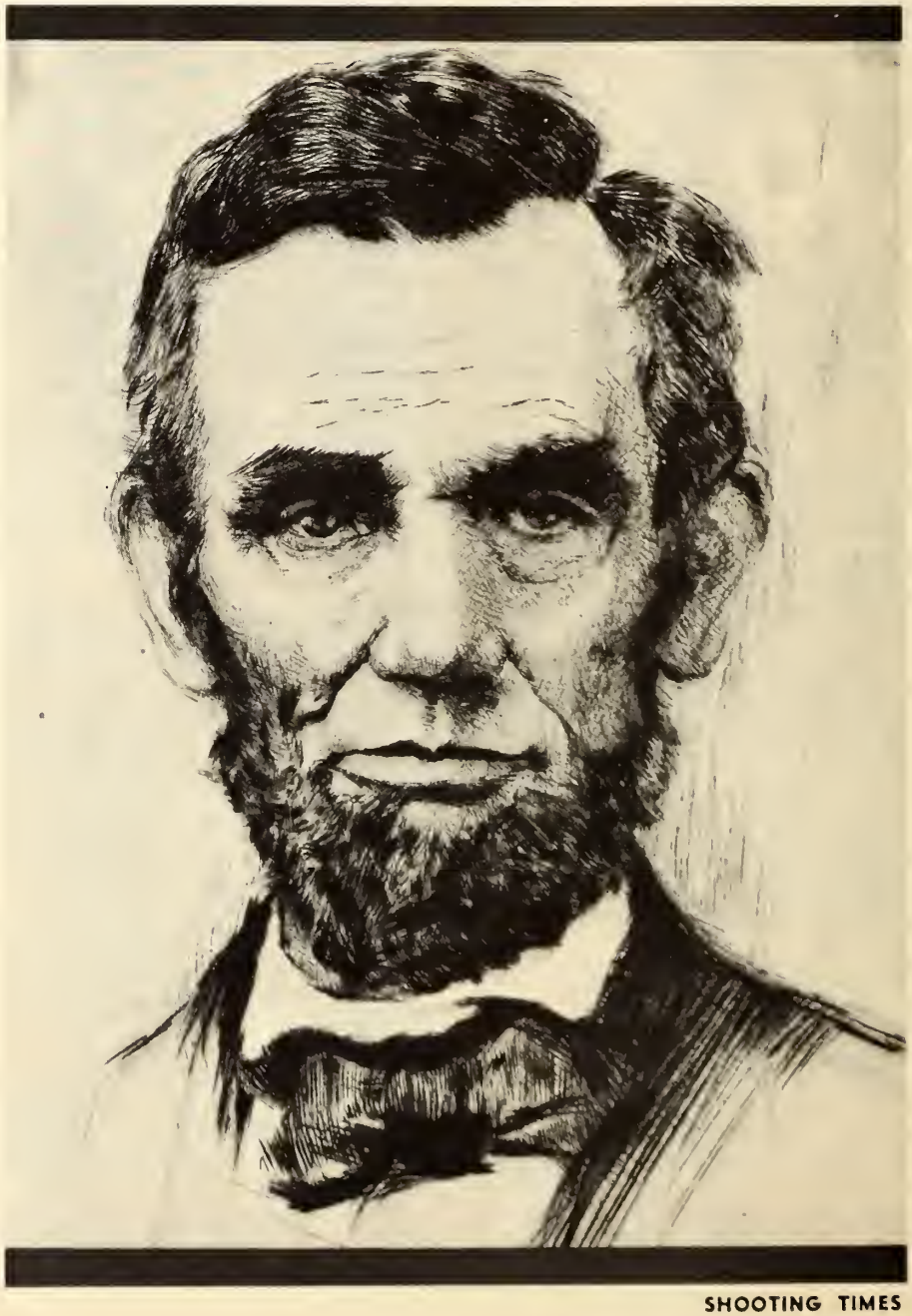
"A few days before the completion of his eighth year, in the absence of his father, a flock of wild turkeys approached the new log cabin, and Abe, with a rifle gun, standing inside, shot through a crack, and killed one of them. He has never since pulled a trigger on any larger game . . ."

The episode suggests that Abe was not so impressed by his marksmanship as he was by the beauty of the big bird he had killed. It is well-known that Lincoln had a fondness for animals and once exclaimed, "I couldn't cut the head off a chicken."

His comment that he never again "pulled a trigger on any larger game" almost implies the "requiem of a huntsman." Lincoln, however, being the politician that he was, most likely wrote the sentence with tongue in cheek. He either confined his hunting to smaller game than a wild turkey, or, as an old-timer in Indiana once said with a twinkle in his eye, "Abe really meant that there wasn't any game that could come into his gun sights that could look much larger than a big Tom-turkey gobbler with his wings fanned out."

Lincoln did do a fair amount of hunting after that, meat being a necessary staple in the frontier diet. Furthermore, there is good evidence that Abe owned some rifles. Perhaps he didn't shoot deer and bear, or even turkeys, but he must have sharpened his sights on smaller animals. Once, while president, he took out his pocket-knife and whittled a better wooden site for a gun he was testing. Probably Lincoln's father, Tom, killed all the bigger game for the family table, as he was known as a good hunter.

Lincoln wrote of the abounding game on the Indiana frontier in 1816. "We reached our new home (Perry County, later Spencer County) about the time



This unusual etching of Lincoln is part of the collection of Mrs. Grant Miles of Peoria, Ill. Artist's signature is simply "Nuytten." Can any reader furnish information on this man?

the state came into the union. It was a wild region, with many bear and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up."

The Lincoln family, new residents of the Hoosier State, found the most primitive conditions, and again in Abraham's own words, they "settled in an unbroken forest, and clearing away of the surplus wood was the great task ahead." Of himself, at the time, he wrote, "though very young, was large of his age, and had an axe put into his hands at once . . ." If Tom Lincoln taught him to handle that most useful instrument, as Abe called it, certainly he was also shown how to handle a gun —as much a necessity in the wilderness as an axe.

Years later, Mr. Lincoln looked back on his boyhood and caught the feeling of his early days with an attempt at poetry:

"When first my father settled here
'Twas then the frontier line
The panther's scream filled the night with fear
And bears preyed on the swine."

Their home in southern Indiana was on the Little Pigeon Creek, a place that derived its name from the passenger pigeons that made the area their feeding and nesting grounds. So great were the droves of pigeons that winged their way about, their vast numbers literally darkened the skies. Though it was not much of a sport to shoot these abundant birds, Tom Lincoln often supplied his table with the tasty bird. Today, this fine game bird is totally extinct. But in those days it took hours for them to fly past the Lincoln cabin and the very air was filled with the dreamy buzzing of their wings.

One virtually forgotten story about Lincoln as a hunter comes from a neighborhood family whose descendants still live in southern Indiana, the Brooners.

Peter and Nancy (Rusher) Brooner settled in the pioneer community in 1814, and two years later, Thomas and Nancy (Hanks) Lincoln arrived with their family to become their neighbors. The Brooners had two sons, Henry and Allen. Henry was five years older than Abe Lincoln, and Allen was four years younger, but the boys became good friends, as well as hunting companions.

The two families became as neighborly as the half-mile distance between their homes would permit. The boys often stayed overnight at each others cabin. Their mothers, the two Nancys, often exchanged recipes for venison stew and other dishes for their tables.

Sadly enough, both Abe and the Brooner boys experienced similar grim days when their mothers died just a week apart in the fall of 1818. The dread milk sickness hit many families in the county, and the helpless pioneers did not know what caused the fatal sickness to cattle and humans. In the hot, dry days of late summer the cattle often sought forage in the shaded woodland areas. There they ate the stems and leaves of the plant called poison snakeroot. The plant's chalkwhite blooms contained tremetol, which harbored the fatal poison.

Pioneers who drank the milk of an infected cow usually died in less than a week. Children of the Lincolns and Brooners silently watched their mothers being lowered into graves nearby on a wooded knoll. When Nancy Lincoln was laid to rest near Mrs. Brooner, Peter Brooner extended his hand to Tom Lincoln, now companions in the same kind of sorrow, and said, "We are brothers now."

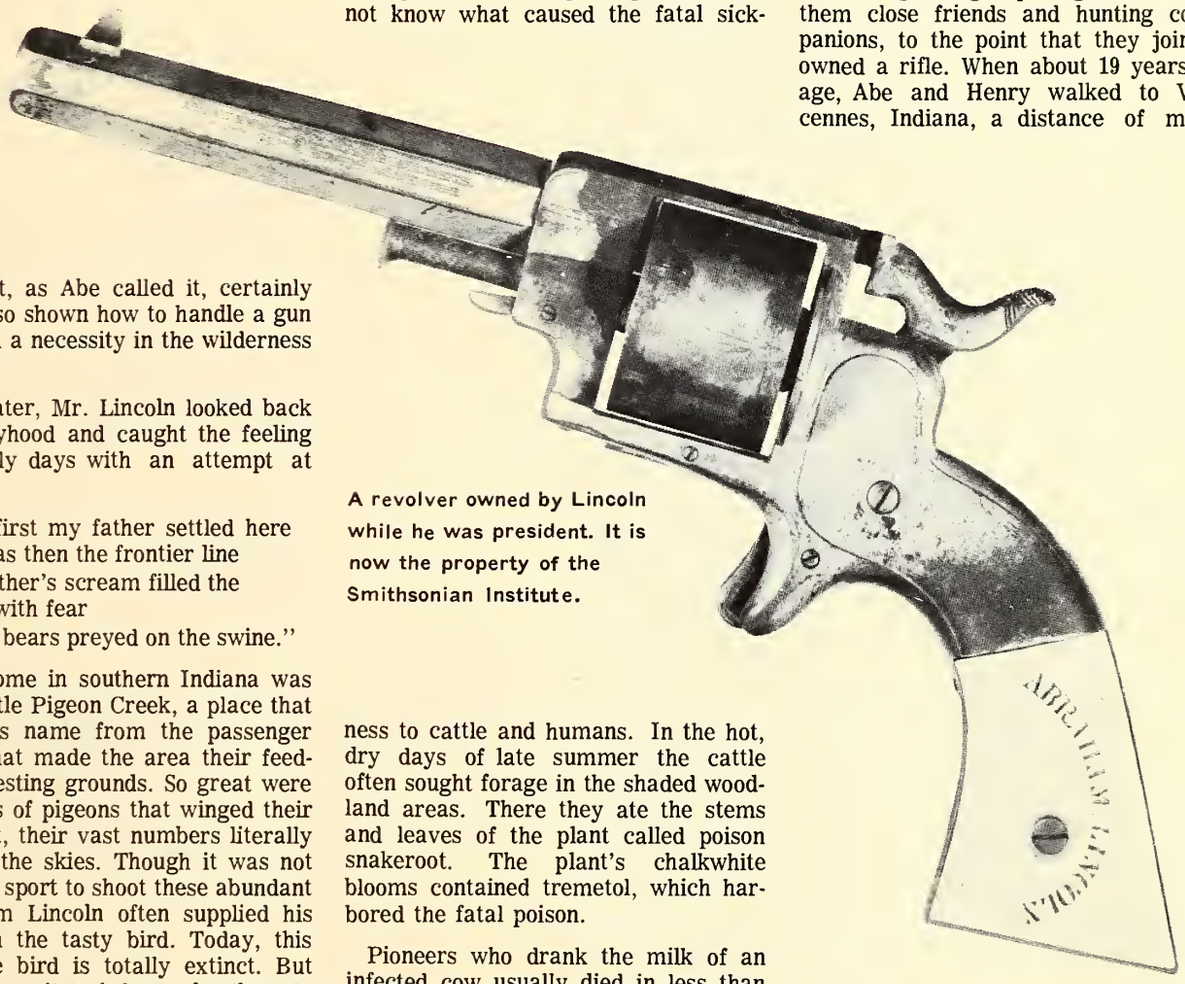
The painful losses to the lonely families made them even more dependent on each other for a time. The terrible experience caused the youngsters to take over more of the family responsibilities. Abe's sister, Sarah, was only 11—two years older than her brother—and had to try to fill her mother's shoes. For a year she did her best at being "Abe's little mother" until Tom Lincoln married again to the widow, Sarah Bush Johnston. Then happier days followed.

Abe and the Brooner boys worked and played together. Henry and Abe often rode horseback together to Huffman's Mill on the Anderson Creek, to take their corn meal to be ground. The older boy recalled that Abe was a great book reader, and said, "Abe had a great memory, and for hours he would tell me what he had read."

Years growing up together made them close friends and hunting companions, to the point that they jointly owned a rifle. When about 19 years of age, Abe and Henry walked to Vincennes, Indiana, a distance of more than fifty miles. Their object was to purchase a gun in partnership. They paid $15 for a flintlock. The squirrel rifle, as they called it, was appropriately tested in the woods as they returned home. For several seasons they hunted together, sharing the gun.

In 1830, when the Lincoln family moved from Indiana to Illinois, Henry purchased Abe's interest in the gun. Henry kept it until 1872, when he presented it to his adopted son, Samuel Brooner on the day of his marriage.

(Continued on Page 56)



A revolver owned by Lincoln while he was president. It is now the property of the Smithsonian Institute.

GUNS in his LIFE

(Continued from Page 17)

Old Henry Brooner, Lincoln's hunting partner, lived to be 85. He died in 1890. Somewhere along the line the old squirrel rifle was changed from a flintlock to one that would shoot percussion caps. In 1903, Rev. J. T. Hobson, of Dayton, Ohio, visited the old friends and associates of the Lincolns in southern Indiana. He interviewed the old-timers still living and wrote a book, "The Footprints of Abraham Lincoln." It was a small, obscure little publication from which some facts were drawn for this article.

Hobson, while in the "Lincoln country" near Dale, Indiana, purchased the old Lincoln-Brooner gun from Sam Brooner. Sam and John W. Kemp, the son-in-law of Henry Brooner, both made oaths as to their knowledge of the gun. Rev. Hobson had known both Henry and Allen Brooner before Lincoln's old boyhood friend had died. He was for two years pastor of the church in Dale, Indiana, and at that time learned about the Lincoln association there and about the gun. Later the gun came into the possession of John E. Burton of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

There was at least one other rifle that Abe owned after he left Indiana. In 1957, W. J. Wooley of Cincinnati turned up a gun that apparently belonged to Lincoln while he was a resident of New Salem, Illinois. Engraved in the metal on the side of the old rifle, in fancy script, inlaid with silver, are the words,

"Abe Lincoln 1834.
Thomas Lincoln ano 1847"

Could this be the side arm Lincoln carried in the Black Hawk War, or perhaps for hunting in Illinois?

The answer will probably never be known, but it appears that Lincoln gave the gun to his aged father. The writer has examined the old gun and the engraved lettering looks to be a genuine contemporary inscription.

Abe Lincoln was elected to Congress in 1846, and if he presented the gun to his father before he left the state for Washington, it would have been a nice gesture to the aged pioneer who had taught him all he knew about firearms. And wouldn't the proud father be pleased to have his name engraved under that of his illustrious son, a representative to Congress from their state of Illinois?

This story would not be complete without a reference to Lincoln's final "association" with guns—that is, the day nearly a century ago when a single lead ball from a Derringer ended his life.

More than one attempt was made on his life while he was our country's Chief Executive, and some of the attempts to assassinate him were with rifles. The Great Emancipator owned a pistol while in the presidency, but would never carry it for his own protection.

So it was that guns played some small part in Lincoln's life, and regretfully, a much greater part in his death.

Proudly Presenting The World's *First* Authentic Reproduction of the

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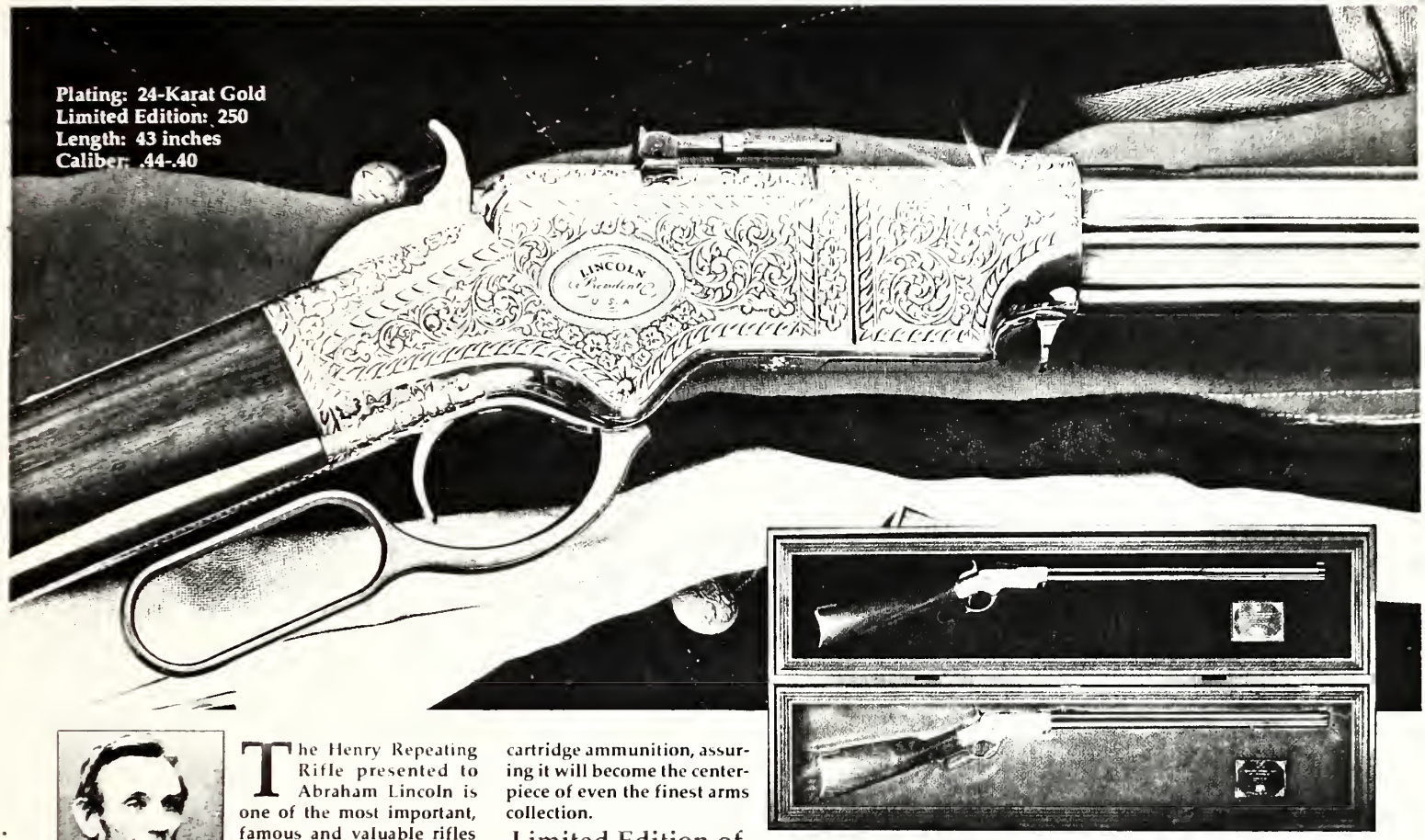
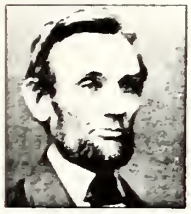


Optional Walnut Display Case lined in velvet appropriate to the President honored (Lincoln model: Federal Blue; Davis model: Confederate Gray). Each measures 49"x 11" x 4" and can be wall mounted or displayed flat. The acrylic-glass lid and brass locks protect the rifle from dust and unauthorized handling.



The Henry Repeating Rifle presented to Abraham Lincoln is one of the most important, famous and valuable rifles in the world. Not only did it belong to one of America's greatest Presidents, but it is one of the few presentation-grade Henrys ever created. The original is a priceless national treasure in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Now, to honor the 125th Anniversary of the Civil War, The American Historical Foundation is proud to present this *firing* Limited Edition of Abraham Lincoln's Henry Repeating Rifle.

Because this is the world's *first* reproduction of the Lincoln Henry it is especially valuable to both Civil War enthusiasts and arms collectors.

Highly Collectible

To collectors "firsts" are of particular interest. As a "first," this Limited Edition Henry falls into a collecting category which has seen many, well-documented price increases. And as a family heirloom, it allows you to show your respect for the long conflict responsible for reuniting our nation.

Hand Engraved; 24-Karat Gold

This museum-quality reproduction features full coverage of elaborate hand engraving across both sides of the receiver and en suite across the buttplate. The entire frame and buttplate are plated with 24-Karat Gold, a dramatic contrast to the hand-finished deluxe walnut stock and the "peacock" blue of the 24" barrel and magazine.

Like Lincoln's original Henry, this rifle features the rare, early, rounded buttplate and the sporting-type adjustable rear sight, mounted in the frame position.

But this is more than just a showpiece; each is a *firing* rifle chambered for readily available .44-40 cartridge ammunition, assuring it will become the centerpiece of even the finest arms collection.

Limited Edition of Only 250

Due to the time required to hand engrave each rifle, the edition limit is restricted to only 250. Each is serially numbered between 1 and 250 with the special prefix "AL" for Abraham Lincoln. This low edition limit is your guarantee of future rarity and value.

Appropriate to the occasion honored, the 125th Anniversary of the Civil War, the Jefferson Davis Henry Rifle is also available. This is the *first* long-arm ever issued to honor the Commander-In-Chief of the Confederacy. Each is ornately hand engraved and plated with Sterling Silver. The edition limit is only 250, numbered 1 through 250, with the special prefix "JD" for Jefferson Davis. This is based on the Henry presented "In Defense of President Davis," which is now on display at the Museum of The Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia.

A Certificate of Authenticity accompanies each Henry Rifle, attesting to the serial number, the edition limit and the purity of the precious metal. Matching serial numbers for both editions are available if you act promptly.

To hand build each rifle, the Foundation selected the leading expert on historical repeaters, Aldo Uberti.

Satisfaction Guaranteed

This is available exclusively through The American Historical Foundation, the leader in the field of military arms collecting. To reserve, call, write or visit. With your reservation you will also be made a Member. Satisfaction is guaranteed or return within 30 days for a full refund. If you do not have a Federal Firearms License, the Foundation will coordinate delivery with you through your local firearms dealer after your reservation has been received here. If you do have an FFL, send a signed copy and your Henry Repeating Rifle will be delivered directly to you.

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Please respond by 31 January 1990
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Yes, I wish to reserve the firing, limited edition Henry Repeating Rifles indicated below. I will also receive a Certificate of Authenticity and membership in the Foundation. Satisfaction Guaranteed.

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☐ My deposit (or credit card authorization) of $195 per Rifle is enclosed
Please ☐ charge or ☐ invoice the balance due . . .
☐ in ten equal monthly payments of $330.
☐ in full.

☐ Please also send the optional Walnut Display Case adding $249 to the final payment selected.

☐ My payment in full is enclosed ($3495 per Rifle; Display Case add $249).

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